

## Message Text

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43

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SAM-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 181325Z AUG 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4095

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0643

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, ET SU

SUBJECT: A CURRENT SUDANESE VIEW OF ERITREA

1. ON AUGUST 18, THE APO REVIEWED THE ERITREAN SITUATION AND ETHIOPIAN-SUDANESE RELATIONS WITH THE SUDANESE CONSUL GENERAL, ABDALLAH ALI GABIR. ABDALLAH WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE DETACHED ABOUT THE ABORTIVE SUDANESE COUP OF EARLY JULY, AND THEREFORE WILLING TO FOCUS ON THE LOCAL SITUATION. HE REVIEWED THE EFFORTS THAT THE GOS HAS MADE TO MEDIATE A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE ERITREAN SITUATION. HE NOTED THAT THE GOS HAD WELCOMED THE EPMG'S NINE-POINT DECLARATION, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE NOW URGED THE EPMG TO SHOW SOME FLEXIBILITY IN APPLYING IT AS A BASIS OF NEGOTIATION. LIKEWISE, THE GOS HAS BEEN URGING THE INSURGENT LEADERS TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS.

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2. ABDALLAH NOTED THAT ETHIO-SUDANESE RELATIONS HAD IMPROVED SOME WHAT AS A RESULT OF EPMG'S SOFT-PEDALING THEIR BLASTS AGAINST "ARAB IMPERIALISTS" WHO SUPPORT AND MANIPULATE THE ERITREAN SEPARATISTS. THESE ACCUSATIONS WERE SHELVED AT THE TIME OF MAJOR BERHANU'S MISSION TO VARIOUS ARAB CAPITALS. ACCORDING TO ABDALLAH, DURING HIS VISIT TO KHARTOUM BERHANU WAS TOLD DIRECTLY BY NIMIERI THAT IF THE EPMG SOUGHT ONLY TO UNDERMINE SUPPORT FOR THE INSURGENTS AND TO DISSEMBLE ABOUT THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM, THAT SUDAN WOULD SIMPLY CLOSE ITS BORDERS AND REJECT ANY FURTHER EPMG INITIATIVES ON THE SUBJECT. THE SUDANESE VIEW THIS MEETING AND THE MISSION OF ASRAT DESTA IN EARLY AUGUST AS AN INDICATION OF THE EPMG'S ACCEPTANCE OF GOS'S ROLE AS MEDIATOR, AND REFLECTS THE PMG'S DESIRE FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. APPARENTLY THE REVELATIONS AT THE RECENT TRIAL OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE JULY COUP ATTEMPT THAT COME OF THE MAHDIST FOLLOWERS WERE TRAINED IN ETHIOPIA, WERE NOT CONSIDERED SERIOUS ENOUGH TO CRIPPLE GOS DESIRE TO PURSUE MEDIATION EFFORTS.

3. ABDALLAH EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT THIS PERIOD WOULD WITNESS THE FIRST GENUINE EFFORTS AT NEGOTIATING A SETTLEMENT IN ERITREA. HE WAS CONCERNED, HOWEVER, THAT BOTH SIDES WOULD HAVE TO CONTINUE TO SHOW RESTRAINT ESPECIALLY DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY DAY

CELEBRATIONS. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE ONSET OF RAMADAN IN ABOUT 10 DAYS WOULD DISSUADE THE MUSLIM REBELS FROM ANY OVERT ACTION. ON THE SUBJECT OF DISUNITY AMONG THE INSURGENTS, ABDALLAH CLAIMED THAT UNIFICATION OF THE EXTERNAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PLF AND ELF STILL HAD FORCE AND THE SPLIT BETWEEN PLF FIELD COMMANDER ISSIAS AFEWORK AND PLF EXTERNAL LEADER OSMAN SALEH SABBE DID NOT PRECLUDE THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS BY THE UNIFIED EXTERNAL LEADERSHIP WITH THE EPMG. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT PATCHING UP THE DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE PLF WAS STILL VERY IMPORTANT, AND SHOULD BE ATTENDED TO DIRECTLY.

4. COMMENT: ABDALLAH'S GENERAL OPTIMISM EXCEEDS THAT OF THE CONGEN AND OTHER OBSERVERS LARGELY BECAUSE HE SEES A VERY PRESTIGE-ENHANCING ROLE FOR HIS GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, OTHER OBSERVERS ADMIT THAT THERE ARE FAVORABLE SIGNS. THE ABSENCE OF WARLIKE INVECTIVE FROM BOTH SIDES AND SUSPENSION OF VERBAL ATTACKS ON THE ARABS CLEARLY WILL IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE FOR NEGOTIATIONS. CONFIDENTIAL

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